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ABSTRACT

One of a series on critical issues in vocational-technical education, this paper cites a number of programs for training unemployed youth and adults, most of them funded through federal legislation, and discusses the role of the vocational educator in counseling and placing unemployed people. (HD)

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MEETING THE TRAINING, COUNSELING, AND PLACEMENT NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH AND ADULTS

A Paper Prepared for

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INTRODUCTION

A basic aim of today's society is to give all people the opportunity to pursue a meaningful and fulfilling career. Nonetheless, unemployed rates for youth and adults continue to make the attainment of this goal unrealistic for many. The purpose of this paper is to explore some effective ways by which vocational educators can help meet the training, counseling, and placement needs of the unemployed.

TRAINING

In the past much discussion has centered around the concept of vocational education versus vocational training. These two terms have been defined by Thompson in the following way:

> "Vocational training is concerned with social utility. Its specific purpose is to fit a man for a job. Vocational education, on the other hand, being free of exculsive concern for social utility, should be concerned with the individual's welfare. Its purpose should be to assist him in exploring a career not in fitting him to a specific job." [1]

With this context in mind, one can identify a number of programs and agencies aimed at training unemployed youth and adults. Perhaps the most prevalent program in existence today is the Comprehensive Education Training Act. This act, developed in the 1960's to replace the Manpower Development Training Act, provides for expenditures to train persons for new careers, advance current careers, improve training, and prevent layoffs.

A major component of the CETA program is its emphasis on local control and planning. The training may be conducted in existing public agencies or contracted to other institutions in the community. Training may take the form of classroom instruction, on-the-job training, or work experience activities.

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Unemployed youth and adults are also served through apprenticeship programs administered through the voluntary cooperation of labor unions, management, state apprenticeship agencies, and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. In many cases, it is believed that some jobs can be more effectively taught by the industry itself while the individual is on the job. Therefore, some industries and trade unions assist in the training of youth and adults.

A number of training programs for unemployed youth and adults were made available by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This act emphasizes educational and vocational training as effective means to overcome poverty. Among these programs is the Neighborhood Youth Corps which enables low income students to earn money while attending school. This can encourage potential school dropouts to finish their education. Another provision of this act is training for unemployed youth and adults through Community Action Programs. This agency attempts to mobilize all community resources in activities aimed toward the elimination of poverty or the causes of poverty. In addition, adult basic education programs under this act are directed toward persons eighteen years and over who need to learn communications skills thus improving their ability to benefit from occupational training.

Another current program aimed at meeting the training needs of unemployed youth and adults is Project 7001. Sponsored by National DECA, this project provides training, counseling, and placement for school dropouts. A program of individualized instruction is planned which enables each individual to overcome barriers to employment and learn skills appropriate for his/her employment. Placement coordinators serve as counselors in assisting the participants with problems encountered on the job and in other aspects of their daily life.

Several programs could be cited as examples of training for unemployed. One such program is a cooperative endeavor between the Chicago mayor's office, Zenith, and General Electric. The program promises to upgrade workers who have temporarily lost their jobs as well as to help the corporations meet affirmative action goals. While workers are on layoff and receiving unemployment insurance benefits, they will receive training designed to lead to upward mobility as the economy accelerates. Trainees from these major industries are getting an opportunity to train for useful positions while being temporarily away from their jobs.[2]

Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey coordinates a program that offers numerous men and women from the Camden community an opportunity for a better tomorrow by giving them an employable skill. Trainees range in age from eighteen to sixty. Some come from the ranks of the unemployed. Others come from jobs with little or no future. While at the center, trainees receive a stipend relieving the economic burden and enabling the trainee to concentrate on learning a skill that will put him/her on his/her feet in the labor market.[3]

Public education institutions are assuming a part of the responsibility for training unemployed persons also. Specifically, many area vocational schools offer programs appropriate for training veterans under provisions of the GI Bill, CETA program participants, vocational rehabilitation referees, and others. Likewise, technical schools offer a variety of programs appropriate for the unemployed. Expansion of university evening school programs points out its attempt to meet the needs of unemployed members of the community. Vocational rehabilitation is designed to help persons overcome handicaps which may have contributed to their unemployed status.

One might conclude that there is no simple solution for meeting the training needs of the unemployed. However, Richard Whinfield has

offered these suggestions in helping to solve the problem:

1. upgrade existing training staff.
2. utilize more non-vocational educators.
3. develop new programs to train teachers of special groups.
4. maintain cooperation of all service agencies to aid individuals.[4]

Consequently, in order to meet the training needs of the unemployed it seems appropriate to say that no single agency can be successful; rather, it is a unified program of several cooperating agencies.

COUNSELING

The vocational educator must be keenly aware of the needs of the unemployed if he/she is to effectively work with these individuals in a counseling relationship. As counselor, one must attempt to help the unemployed individual change life patterns so that he/she can cope with contemporary demands of life and employment. Such an understanding demands that the counselor must have knowledge of the cultural background of each individual and consciously avoid stereotyping these unemployed persons. Frequently, the unemployed person cannot achieve middle class counseling goals; therefore, the empathetic counselor is able to appreciate these differences and establish effective communications with the individual.

The process of vocational development may have been somewhat limited when considering the circumstances which often surround the unemployed youth and adult. In a review of the literature of the aspirations of American youth, Dansereau concluded that youth tend to list and rank those occupations with which they feel familiar; as a result, the unemployed youth and adult seem to limit the occupational roles in which they see themselves to the unskilled, low paying jobs.[5] Occupational choices of the low income often seem determined by the environment rather than serious vocational exploration.[6] In a study

on vocational development of unemployed adolescents, it was found that the level of vocational maturity was consistently lower for the unemployed than for the middle class youth, indicating a lack of opportunity to view themselves in different occupational roles.[7]

It seems logical that the counselor must explore a variety of opportunities available to the unemployed based upon these findings. The counselor must see him/herself as an agent for social change to encourage the unemployed to better him/herself. Likewise, the counselor must be open-minded to discover talents, weaknesses, individualisms, values, and skills of the unemployed.

Many problems surround the unemployed youth and adult. These may include a lack of communication skills, poor financial management, inability to set realistic goals, a lack of motivation, and a need to trust. Being sensitive to these needs, the counselor's first responsibility is to help the unemployed person develop a positive sense of self. In turn, the counselor can help the unemployed person build upon his/her strengths and help the client explore new employment opportunities.

The counselor's approach must be personal, friendly, and self-revealing when dealing with the unemployed. In meeting the needs of unemployed persons the counselor must remember that this person has a background of personal failure, distrust, and resentment; therefore, the counselor's role is one of support.

PLACEMENT

Placement of trained individuals is the ultimate test of vocational education programs. This process includes not only the initial placement, but follow-up of each graduate, record keeping, supervision, employment contacts, and being available for further counseling after placement.

Placement requires the cooperation of all school personnel. Thus, placement is the culminating process of vocational education and cannot be left to chance as has often been the case in the past. Unemployment creates both social and economic problems. Therefore, the placement of youth and adults is of national concern as an integral part of vocational education programs. A careful selection of a job which is well suited to the individual will help reduce unemployment among trainees who have completed vocational programs.

Placement includes a thorough understanding of the individual. Supplemental information such as job skills, achievement, aptitude, interest, and values must all be considered in job placement. In addition, successful placement requires knowledge about the job being considered. A lack of understanding about the individual or the job results in dissatisfaction of the individual and employer. This process of matching the individual with the job has become so important that many persons have called for trained placement specialists. Gentry has stressed the need for such specialists to help identify the employability characteristics which are required by employers and to take the responsibility for placing individuals on the job.[8]

The attitude of the unemployed toward him/herself and toward work may be a crucial factor in job placement. One program at Sikeston, Missouri consists of forty weeks of intensive training with the goal of changing enrollees' attitudes from defeat to attitudes of self-confidence. The typical student is between eighteen and thirty-five years of age, has a family, is unemployed, and functioning at the third-grade level. A simulated job interview is an integral part of the program. The success of the program is indicated by the more than 84.9 percent placement of the trainees.[9]

Kemp and Vash have developed a placement program aimed toward teaching clients to develop self-placement techniques that could facilitate their search for employment. The enrollees often had backgrounds which indicated that they had a lack of basic skills essential in job placement. Through the placement program, clients increased skills in writing letters, preparing resumes, participating in mock interviews, and assessing past experiences. Enthusiasm and self-confidence increased with the performance of simulated interviews.

Eighty percent of the participants attained employment and almost ninty percent were employed in positions equal to or better than their previous employment. Many enrollees had been unemployed from three to ten years and had given up any expectations of employment.[10] These findings indicate that persons who are preparing for placement should receive an orientation toward jobs and experience activities which would increase their motivation toward placement.

One can conclude that an effective vocational education program must include the placement of its graduates. Little is gained by offering special training for unemployed youth and adults if placement is not an important part of the program.

CONCLUSION

In attempting to draw conclusions from the findings which have been reported here, one must agree that an effective vocational education program dealing with the unemployed has many aspects. Among the most important components are training, counseling, and placement of these individuals. No simple solutions are available to these problems, and the educator must continually make revisions in his/her approach. Many researchers and experimenters have offered suggestions toward meeting the needs of the unemployed, but each individual has unique needs which must

be met in helping him/her become a more successful person in the world of work. In essence, this process seems to present an awesome task for the vocational educator; therefore, acceptance of this responsibility requires a commitment to one's self, education, society, and the trainee.

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